

# ORATION

*J. M. Gage*

DELIVERED AT THE

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLICAN CELEBRATION

OF THE

SIXTY-SECOND ANNIVERSARY

OF THE

INDEPENDENCE OF THE UNITED STATES,

IN THE CITY OF NEW-YORK,

FOURTH JULY, 1838,

BY EDWIN FORREST, ESQ.

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The following communication was received from Mr. FORREST, in reply to a letter addressed to him, by the Committee of Arrangements, in behalf of the Democratic Republican Convention, soliciting a copy of his Oration for publication.

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NEW-YORK, JULY 10th, 1838.

GENTLEMEN,

In complying with your application, for a copy of my Address to the Democracy of this city, on the recent Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, I desire to return my acknowledgments, to the gentlemen you represent, for the complimentary manner, in which they are pleased to speak of that production, and to yourselves individually, for the kind and flattering terms, in which you have communicated their request. I place the Oration in your hands, to do with it as you may think proper; though I am fearful its merits, will not prove to be of that kind, which best stand the ordeal of deliberate perusal in print. It was my intention, on first receiving your letter, to give the Address a thorough revision, with a view to strip it somewhat of its rhetorical character, by retrenching its exuberances of language, and subduing it to a soberer style of expression, more suited to compositions addressed to the "pauser judgement" of the reader. But, besides that, my engagements do not afford me leisure for this purpose. I am not satisfied, that it would be dealing in good faith with the public, to put before them, as my Oration pronounced on the 4th of July, an essay in any considerable degree, modified by subsequent reflection and elaboration.

I therefore, submit the manuscript to you, in the first words of hasty composition; only asking the reader to exercise so much leniency, as I have a right to solicit, from the fact, that, of the brief period allowed me for preparation, much was necessarily dissipated, by the interruption of unavoidable, professional, and private occupations.

I have the honor to be, &c. &c. &c.

EDWIN FORREST.

TO RICHARD J. SMITH, C. H. BRYSON, ROBERT WALKER, JAMES E. HYDE, JAMES HENRY, ROBERT TOWNSEND, ROBERT B. BOYD,	} Committee.
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# ORATION.

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FELLOW-CITIZENS,

WE are met this day to celebrate the most august event which ever constituted an epoch in the political annals of mankind. The ordinary occasions of public festivals and rejoicings lie at an infinite depth below that which convenes us here. We meet, not in honor of a victory achieved on the crimson field of war; not to triumph in the acquisitions of rapine; nor to commemorate the accomplishment of a vain revolution, which but substituted one dynasty of tyrants for another. No glittering display of military pomp and pride, no empty pageant of regal grandeur, allures us hither. We come, not to daze our eyes with the lustre of a diadem, placed, with all its attributes of tremendous power, on the head of a being as weak, as blind, as mortal as ourselves. We come, not to celebrate the birthday of a despot, but the birthday of a nation: not to bow down in senseless homage before a throne founded on the prostrate rights of man; but to stand up erect, in the conscious dignity of equal freedom, and join our voices in the loud acclaim, now swelling

from the grateful hearts of fifteen millions of fellow men, in deep acknowledgement for the glorious charter of liberty our fathers this day proclaimed to the world.

How simple, how sublime, is the occasion of our meeting! This vast assemblage is drawn together to solemnize the anniversary of an event which appeals, not to their senses nor to their passions, but to their reason; to triumph at a victory, not of might, but of right; to rejoice in the establishment, not of physical dominion, but of an abstract proposition. We are met to celebrate the declaration of the great principle of human freedom—that inestimable principle which asserts the political equality of mankind. We are met in honor of the promulgation of that charter, by which we are recognized as joint sovereigns of an empire of freemen; holding our sovereignty by a right indeed divine—by the immutable, eternal, irresistible right of self-evident truth. We are met, fellow-citizens, to commemorate the laying of the corner stone of democratic liberty.

Threescore years and two have now elapsed since our fathers ventured on the grand experiment of freedom. The nations of the earth heard with wonder the startling novelty of the principle they asserted, and watched the progress of their enterprise with doubt and apprehension. The heart of the political philanthropist throbbed with anxiety for the result: the down-trodden victims of oppression scarce dared to lift their eyes in hope of a successful termination, while they knew that failure would more strongly rivet their chains: and the despots of the old world, from their “bad eminences,” gloomily looked on, aghast with rage and terror, and felt that a blow had been struck which loosened the foundation of their thrones.

The event illustrates what ample cause there was for the prophetic tremors which thrilled to the soul of arbitrary power. Time has stamped the attestation of its signet on the success of the experiment, and the fabric then erected now stands on the strong basis of established truth, the mark and model of the world. The vicissitudes of threescore years, while they have shaken to the centre the artificial foundations of other governments, have but demonstrated the solidity of the simple and natural structure of democratic freedom. The lapse of time, while it dims the light of false systems, has continually augmented the brightness of that which shines with the inherent and eternal lustre of reason and justice. New stars, from year to year, emerging with perfect radiance in the western horizon, have increased the benignant splendor of that constellation which now shines the political guiding light of the world.

How grand in their simplicity are the elementary propositions on which our edifice of freedom is erected! A few brief, self-evident axioms, furnish the enduring basis of political institutions, which harmoniously accomplish all the legitimate purposes of government to fifteen millions of people. The natural equality of man; the right of a majority to govern; their duty so to govern as to preserve inviolate the sacred obligations of equal justice, with no end in view but the protection of life, property, and social order, leaving opinion free as the wind which bloweth where it listeth: these are the plain, eternal principles on which our fathers reared that temple of true liberty, beneath whose dome their children congregate this day, to pour out their hearts in gratitude for the pre-

cious legacy. Yes! on the everlasting rock of truth the shrine is founded, where we worship freedom; and

“ When the sweeping storm of time  
Has sung its death dirge o’er the ruined fane  
And broken altars of the mighty fiend  
Whose name usurps her honors, and the blood,  
Through centuries clotted there, has floated down  
The tainted flood of ages,” —

that shrine shall stand, unshaken by the beating surge of change, and only washed to purer whiteness by the deluge that overwhelms all other political fabrics.

The very simplicity of those maxims on which is reared the proud arch of our confederated democracies, embracing a hemisphere in its span, gives signal assurance of that inherent durability, which can withstand unhurt the stormy conflicts of opinion, and the tempest breath of time. Simplicity is the invariable characteristic of truth. Error loves to hide her deformity in cumbrous shapes and complicated envelopments, to bury her sophistries in mazy labyrinths of subtlety, and disguise her purposes in oracular ambiguities. But truth is open as the day; her aspect is radiant with candor; her language direct and plain; her precepts admirable in beauty, irresistible in force. The grand elementary principles of whatever is most valuable to man are distinguished by simplicity. If we follow nature to her hiding places, and wring from her the secret by which she conducts her stupendous operations, we shall find that a few simple truths constitute the foundation of all her vast designs. If we roam abroad into the fields of science, the same discovery will reward our investigations. Behold, for example, on what a few self-

evident axioms is reared that sublime and irrefragable system of mathematical reasoning, by means of which man proportions the grandest forms of art, directs his course through the pathless wastes of ocean, or, ascending into the boundless fields of space, tracks the comet in its fiery path, and "unwinds the eternal dances of the sky."

We are apt, in political applications, to confound simplicity with barbarism; but there is the simplicity of intelligence and refinement, as well as the simplicity of ignorance and brutality. Simplicity is the end, as it is the origin, of social effort: it is the goal, as well as the starting post, on the course of nations. Who that reads the lessons of history, or surveys the actual condition of mankind, with thoughtful eyes, does not perceive that, in religion and morals, in science and art, in taste, fashion, manners, every thing, simplicity and true refinement go forward hand in hand. As civilization advances, the gorgeous rites of an idolatrous faith, performed with pompous ceremonial before altars smoking with hecatombs of human victims, are succeeded by the simple and refined worship of a sublimer creed. The dogmas of an arrogant philosophy, full of crude and contradictory assumptions, are followed by the harmonious discoveries of inductive reason. The grotesque and cumbrous forms of architecture, glittering with barbaric pomp and gold, give place to the structures of a simpler and severer taste. Literature strips off her tawdry trappings of superfluous ornament, and rejecting the quaint conceits of cloistered rhetoricians, and their elaborate contortions of phrase, speaks to the heart in words that breathe the sweet simplicity of nature. Simplicity is indeed the last achievement in the power of



man. It is the ultimate lesson to be acquired before he can reach that state of millennial equality and brotherhood, which the inspiring precepts of democratic philosophy, not less than the sublime ethics of the Christian faith, teach us to hope may yet conclude, with an unsullied page, the crime-stained annals of our race.

To the genius of BACON the world is indebted for emancipating philosophy from the subtleties of the schoolmen, and placing her securely on the firm basis of ascertained elementary truth, thence to soar the loftiest flights on the unfailing pinions of induction and analogy. To the genius of JEFFERSON—to the comprehensive reach and fervid patriotism of his mind—we owe a more momentous obligation. What BACON did for natural science, JEFFERSON did for political morals, that important branch of ethics which directly affects the happiness of all mankind. He snatched the art of government from the hands that had enveloped it in sophisms and mysteries, that it might be made an instrument to oppress the many for the advantage of the few. He stripped it of the jargon by which the human mind had been deluded into blind veneration for kings as the immediate vicegerents of God on earth; and proclaimed in words of eloquent truth, which thrilled conviction to every heart, those eternal self-evident first principles of justice and reason, on which alone the fabric of government should be reared. He taught those “truths of power in words immortal” you have this day heard; words which bear the spirit of great deeds; words which have sounded the death-dirge of tyranny to the remotest corners of the earth; which have roused a sense of right, a hatred of oppression, an intense yearning for democratic liberty, in a myriad myriad of human hearts; and which, rever-

berating through time like thunder through the sky, will,

—in the distance far away,  
Waken the slumbering ages.

TO JEFFERSON belongs, exclusively and forever, the high renown of having framed the glorious charter of American liberty. To his memory the benedictions of this and all succeeding times are due for reducing the theory of freedom to its simplest elements, and in a few lucid and unanswerable propositions, establishing a groundwork on which men may securely raise a lasting superstructure of national greatness and prosperity. But our fathers, in the august assemblage of '76, were prompt to acknowledge and adopt the solemn and momentous principles he asserted. With scarce an alteration—with none that affected the spirit and character of the instrument, and with but few that changed in the slightest degree its verbal construction—they published that exposition of human rights to the world, as their Declaration of American Independence; pledging to each other their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor, in support of the tenets it proclaimed. This was the grandest, the most important experiment, ever undertaken in the history of man. But they that entered upon it were not afraid of new experiments, if founded on the immutable principles of right, and approved by the sober convictions of reason. There were not wanting then, indeed, as there are not wanting now, pale counsellors to fear, who would have withheld them from the course they were pursuing, because it tended in a direction hitherto untrod. But they were not to be deterred by the shadowy doubts and timid suggestions of craven spirits, content to be lashed forever round the same circle of miserable expedients, perpetually trying anew

the exploded shifts which had always proved lamentably inadequate before. To such men, the very name of experiment is a sound of horror. It is a spell which conjures up gorgons hydras, and chimeras dire. They seem not to know that all that is valuable in life—that the acquisitions of learning, the discoveries of science, and the refinements of art—are the result of experiment. It was experiment that bestowed on CADMUS those keys of knowledge with which we unlock the treasure-houses of immortal mind. It was experiment that taught BACON the futility of the Grecian philosophy, and led him to that heaven-scaling method of investigation and analysis, on which science has safely climbed to the proud eminence where now she sits, dispensing her blessings on mankind. It was experiment that lifted NEWTON above the clouds and darkness of this visible diurnal sphere, enabling him to explore the sublime mechanism of the stars, and weigh the planets in their eternal rounds. It was experiment that nerved the hand of FRANKLIN to snatch the thunder from the armory of heaven. It was experiment that gave this hemisphere to the world, It was EXPERIMENT that gave this continent FREEDOM.

Let us not be afraid, then, to try experiments, merely because they are new, nor lavish upon aged error the veneration due only to truth. Let us not be afraid to follow reason, however far she may diverge from the beaten path of opinion. All the inventions which embellish life, all the discoveries which enlarge the field of human happiness, are but various results of the bold experimental exercise of that distinguished attribute of man. It was the exercise of reason that taught our sires those simple

elements of freedom on which they founded their stupendous structure of empire. The result is now before mankind, not in the embryo form of doubtful experiment; not as the mere theory of visionary statesmen, or the mad project of hot brained rebels: it is before them in the beautiful maturity of established fact, attested by sixty-two years of national experience, and witnessed throughout its progress by an admiring world! Where does the sun, in all his compass, shed his beams on a country, freer, better, happier than this? Where does he behold more diffused prosperity, more active industry, more social harmony, more abiding faith, hope, and charity? Where are the foundations of private right more stable, or the limits of public order more inviolately observed? Where does labor go to the toil with an alerter step, or an erecter brow, effulgent with the heart-reflected light of conscious independence? Where does agriculture drive his team a-field with a more cheery spirit, in the certain assurance that the harvest is his own? Where does commerce launch more boldly her bark upon the deep, aware that she has to strive but with the tyranny of the elements, and not with the more appalling tyranny of man?

True it is, that a passing cloud has occasionally flecked the serene brightness of our horizon, and cast a momentary shadow on the earth; and there are a sort of boding political soothsayers, who, with malignant alacrity of evil augury, magnify each transient speck into a fearful harbinger of desolating tempests. But an empire, rock-founded as our own, on the adamantine basis of truth and universal equity, mocks the vain predictions, and vainer aspirations, of those who either fear or wish its fall. What though the eager passions of men have some-

times broken through the restraints of order, and heady tumult, with precipitate hand, has seized the sword and scales of justice? Did not the voice of reason instantly hush the clamorous shout of riot, and hasty anger abashed at his own intemperate act, restore the ravished emblems, and bow with deference before the recovered dignity of the laws?

But how pitiful—how worse than pitiful, the wretched aim of those, who gloat over these rare and transient ebullitions of tumultuous rage as supplying an argument against the adequacy and benign effects of democratic government! Have these revilers of the principle of liberty read the lessons taught by the history of the past; or have they considered the forceful admonitions with which the present state of the other empires of the world is fraught? If the mild spirit of equal laws, which derive their sanction immediately from those whom they affect, cannot wholly subdue the stormy passions of man, will they explain what better form of political institutions has accomplished that result?

Methinks they turn, and with ready gesture point to that monarchy from which this young republic sprung. I cast my eyes towards her with no unfilial glance. I reverence England—with all her faults, I reverence the mother of my country, and the great exemplar of the world in arts, in arms, in science, literature, and song. I reverence her for the principles of civil liberty which she has scattered, “like flower seeds by the far winds sown,” over the whole surface of the globe. I reverence her for that she was the parent of Hampden and Sidney, of Bacon and Newton, of Milton and Shakspeare. Yes!

though she drove our fathers from her shores with the accursed scourge of political and religious persecution, and though, like an unnatural parent, she battled with her children when they asserted the unalienable prerogatives of humanity and nature, I reverence England. But let not my eyes be turned to where she sits in the swollen pride of aristocratic grandeur, for an example of that system of polity which can wholly restrain the outbreaks of popular phrenzy. Behold, what fires are those which flash across her borders, and wrap them in the red and fumid wreath of conflagration? They are kindled by the riotous and incendiary sons of agriculture, who, pushed by want to the extreme verge of endurance, are now excited to madness at the sight of art introducing her contrivances to render their labour superfluous, and snatch the scant crust from their famishing mouths. But hark! in another quarter the hoarse roar of many voices is ascending, mingled with the crash of massive bodies, falling in shattered fragments to the earth. The tumult proceeds from the pale operatives of the manufactories, turning at last and rending the hands that degraded human nature to the drudgery of brutes, without affording it even the respite and nurture which brutes enjoy. And mark again, from yonder sea-port come the sounds of sudden fray. A press-gang, with the myrmidons of power at their backs, are in fierce conflict with the populace. The latter contend desperately, for they are contending for the inestimable right of personal freedom. But see the guards in blood-red livery, (fit color for their sanguinary trade!) hasten forward to the field of action, and restore peace and order at the bayonet's point. These are some of the scenes which a cursory glance over England describes.

The tremendous means of overawing man which a despotism exercises, may repress, for a while, the outward manifestations of human passion ; but, the mischief works not less surely that it works concealed, and at last, gathering strength superior to the resistance, it bursts with an explosion the more terrific for the delay. The dams and embankments of arbitrary power may, for a while, compel the stream of society to flow in a direction contrary to that of nature ; but wider is the havoc of the deluge, when the flood sweeps away its bounds, and gushes in wild torrents over the land. Happy, then, that country, whose simple polity places no restraint on opinion, which, freely expressing itself in the constituted modes, continually conforms the institutions to the public will, and thus prevents all occasion and excuse for violent disruption and change. Compare the annals of this confederacy with those of any other nation, and the beneficent influence of democratic liberty, in this respect, as in all others, will plainly appear.

Can the political skeptic cast his eyes over this vast empire—can he look on the broad bright face and sturdy form of popular freedom, and not find all his fine woven web of speculative doubts of man's capacity for self-government melt like breath into the wind ? It is but threescore years since our national birthday dawned upon the earth. Look now abroad upon this populous land. Is this the continent, now resonant with the many-mingled hum of active life, which yesterday presented but the scattered smoke of a few colonial settlements, curling here and there from the dense foliage of a cheerless, boundless, trackless wilderness ? Whence is derived the strange activity which has wrought this change—so

vast, so sudden, it almost makes the wildest tales of magic credible? Whence?—but from the inspiring influence of equal democratic liberty.

“ Yes, in the desert there is built a home  
For freedom. Genius is made strong to rear  
The monuments of man beneath the dome  
Of a new heaven. Myriads assemble there  
Whom the proud lords of man, in rage or fear,  
Drive from their wasted homes.”

No need of standing armies here, “the hired bravoos that defend a tyrant’s throne,” to protect the people in the secure enjoyment of their rights. No need of complicated guards and checks to keep the even balance of the law. No need of a portentous and unnatural union between things sacred and profane, to force the unwilling consciences of men to worship God with rites their souls reject. Here at last is discovered the grand political truth, that in the simplicity of government consists the strength and majesty of the people; that as the contrivances of state increase in complexity, those whom they affect are degraded and made wretched; and that when the institutions of society shall conform to the beautiful simplicity of nature, which does nothing in vain, then will man have attained the utmost limit of human felicity. In the progress of that great democratic experiment, the origin of which we are met this day to celebrate, let us keep constantly in mind, that the sole end of government, consistent with the unalienable equality of human rights, and the greatest diffusion of happiness, is the mere protection of men from mutual aggression, leaving them otherwise in unlimited freedom, to follow their own pursuits, express their own opinions, and practise their own faith.



The day is past forever when religion could have feared the consequences of freedom. In what other land do so many heaven-pointing spires attest the devotional habits of the people? In what other land is the altar more faithfully served, or its fires kept burning with a steadier lustre? Yet the temples in which we worship are not founded on the violated rights of conscience, but erected by willing hands; the creed we profess is not dictated by arbitrary power, but is the spontaneous homage of our hearts; and religion, viewing the prodigious concourse of her voluntary followers, has reason to bless the auspicious influence of democratic liberty and universal toleration. She has reason to exclaim, in the divine language of Milton, "though all the winds of doctrine were let loose to play upon the earth, so truth be in the field, we do injuriously, by licensing and prohibiting, to misdoubt her strength. Let her and falsehood grapple! for who ever knew truth put to the worse in a free and open encounter? Her confuting is the best and surest suppressing." The soundness of this glorious text of religious liberty has now been approved to the world by the incontestible evidence of our national experience, since it is one of those "columns of true majesty" on which our political fabric stands. Let bigotry and intolerance turn their lowering eyes to our bright example, and learn the happy, thrice happy consequences, both to politics and religion, from placing an insuperable bar to that incestuous union, from which, in other lands, such a direful brood of error's monstrous shapes have sprung.

Not less auspicious would be the result, if adhering closely to the avowed purposes and duties of democratic government, we should preserve an equal distance be-

tween politics and trade, confining the one to the mere protection of men in the uninfringed enjoyment of their equal rights, and leaving the other to be regulated by enterprise and competition, according to those natural principles of economic wisdom which will be ever found more just and efficient than the imperfect and arbitrary restraints of legislation. But above all, let us be careful, by no political interference with the pursuits of industry and improvement, to violate that grand maxim of equality, on which, as on its corner stone, the fabric of democratic freedom rests. That we should frown indignantly on the first motion of an attempt to sunder one portion of the union from another, was the parting admonition of Washington; but with deeper solicitude, and more sedulous and constant care, should we guard against a blow being aimed, no matter how light, or by what specious pretext defended, against that great elementary principle of liberty, which, once shaken, the whole structure will topple to the ground. Beware, therefore, of connecting government, as a partner or co-operator, with the affairs of trade, lest the selfish and rapacious spirit of trade should prove stronger than the spirit of liberty, and the peculiar advantage of the votaries of traffic should be regarded more than the general and equal good of the votaries of freedom.

Yet deem me not governed by a narrow sentiment of hostility to traffic. On the contrary, I am its friend. I regard it in all its legitimate influences as a benefactor of mankind. I regard it as the cultivator of amity between the distant portions of the globe, knitting them together by a constant interchange of kindly offices in a thousand ties of interest and affection. I regard it as

showing men their mutual dependence on each other, and cherishing a feeling of brotherhood for the whole human race. It explores every desert of the earth, and traverses every ocean, rescuing its continents and islands from the long night of ignorance and barbarism, and bringing them within the blessed light of the day-star of religion and civilization. The fervor of equinoctial heat cannot relax, nor the accumulated horrors of polar winter chill its hardy and elastic spirit of enterprise. It breaks through the sordid barriers which, without its aid, would confine each being to his own narrow spot of earth, and makes the inhabitant of the most ungenial climate a commoner of the world, bountifully supplying him with its various productions, and opening to him all its magazines of science, literature, and art. These are the achievements of traffic under the influence of its own simple and salutary laws. But once violate the great principle of equality, once invest it with political immunities, and, from a benefactor, it becomes an oppressor of mankind, perverting the true end of government, snatching its advantages with a greedy and monopolizing hand, and leaving its burdens to fall with augmented weight on other necks. Beware, then, of bestowing under any name, or for any purpose, exclusive privileges on any portion of the people; for it is the nature of power to enlarge itself by continual aggregation, and like the snowball, which, by its own motion, becomes an avalanche, and buries the hamlet in ruins, it may fall, ere we dream of danger, and crush us with its weight.

If, in any respect, the great experiment which America has been trying before the world has failed to accomplish the true end of government—"the greatest good of the


greatest number"—it is only where she herself has proved recreant to the fundamental article of her creed. If we have not prospered to the greatest possible extent compatible with the condition of humanity, it is because we have sometimes deviated, in practice, from the sublime maxim, "that all men are created free and equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, and that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." If in no instance we have transgressed this axiom of democratic liberty, how is it that one man may freely perform what it is a crime for another to attempt? By what principle, accordant with equal rights, are the penal interdictions of the law thrown across my path, to shut me from a direction, which another may pursue without fear or hinderance? Why are a few decorated with the insignia of chartered privileges, and armed in artificial intangibility, while the many stand undistinguished in the plain exterior of the natural man, with no forged contrivance of the law to shield them from the "shocks that flesh is heir to?" Are these things consistent with the doctrine which teaches that equal protection is the sole true end of government? that its restraints should hold all with equal obligation? that its blessings, like the "gentle dews of heaven," should fall equally on the heads of all?

It is one of the admirable incidents of democracy, that it tends, with a constant influence, to equalize the external condition of man. Perfect equality, indeed, is not within the reach of human effort.

"Order is heaven's first law, and this confess,  
Some are and must be greater than the rest;  
More rich, more wise."

Strength must ever have an advantage over weakness; sagacity over simplicity; wisdom over ignorance. This is according to the ordination of nature, and no institutions of man can repeal the decree. But the inequality of society is greater than the inequality of nature; because it has violated the first principle of justice, which nature herself has inscribed on the heart—the equality, not of physical or intellectual condition, but of moral rights. Let us then hasten to retrace our steps, wherein we have strayed from this golden rule of democratic government. This only is wanting to complete the measure of our national felicity.

There is no room to fear that persuasion to this effect, though urged with all the power of logic, and all the captivating arts of rhetoric, by lips more eloquent than those which address you now, will lead too suddenly to change. Great changes in social institutions, even of acknowledged errors, cannot be instantly accomplished, without endangering those boundaries of private right which ought to be held inviolate and sacred. Hence it happily arises, that the human mind entertains a strong reluctance to violent transitions, not only where the end is doubtful, but where it is clear as the light of day, and beautiful as the face of truth; and it is only when the ills of society amount to tyrannous impositions, that this aversion yields to a more powerful incentive of conduct. Then leaps the sword of revolution from its scabbard, and a passage to reformation is hewn out through blood. But how blest is our condition, that such a resort can never be needed. "Peace on earth, and good will among men," are the natural fruits of our political system. The gentle weapon of suffrage is adequate for all the


 purposes of freemen. From the armory of opinion we issue forth in coat of mail more impenetrable than ever cased the limbs of warrior on the field of sanguinary strife. Our panoply is of surest proof, for it is supplied by reason. Armed with the ballot, a better implement of warfare than sword of the "icebrook's temper," we fight the sure fight, relying with steadfast faith on the intelligence and virtue of the majority to decide the victory on the side of truth. And should error for awhile carry the field by his stratagems, his opponents, though defeated, are not destroyed: they rally again to the conflict, animated with the strong assurance of the ultimate prevalence of right.

"Truth crushed to earth shall rise again,  
 The eternal years of God are hers;  
 But error wounded writhes in pain,  
 And dies among his worshippers."

What bounds can the vision of the human mind descry to the spread of American greatness, if we but firmly adhere to those first principles of government which have already enabled us, in the infancy of national existence, to vie with the proudest of the century-nurtured states of Europe? The old world is cankered with the diseases of political senility, and cramped by the long-worn fetters of tyrannous habit. But the empire of the west is in the bloom and freshness of being. Its heart is unseared by the prejudices of "damned custom;" its intellect unclouded by the sophisms of ages. From its borders, kissed by the waves of the Atlantic, to

"The continuous woods  
 Where rolls the Oregon, and hears no sound,  
 Save his own dashing——;"

from the inland oceans of the north, to the sparkling surface of the tropical sea, rippled by breezes laden with the perfumes of eternal summer, our vast theatre of national achievement extends. What a course is here for the grand race of democratic liberty! Within these limits a hundred millions of fellow beings may find ample room, and verge enough to spread themselves and grow up to their natural eminence. With a salubrious clime to invigorate them with health and a generous soil to nourish them with food; with the press—that grand embalmer not of the worthless integuments of mortality, but of the offsprings of immortal mind—to diffuse its vivifying and ennobling influences over them; with those admirable results of inventive genius to knit them together, by which space is deprived of its power to bar the progress of improvement and dissipate the current of social amity; with a political faith which acknowledges, as its fundamental maxim, the golden rule of christian ethics, “do unto others, as you would have them do unto you:” with these means, and the constantly increasing dignity of character which results from independence, what bounds can be set to the growth of American greatness? A hundred millions of happy people! A hundred millions of co-sovereigns, recognizing no law, but the recorded will of a majority; no end of law, but mutual and equal good; no superior, but God alone!